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Multiculturalism in Cameroon and Strategies for Language Conservation

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Abstract

Cameroon, often referred to as "Africa in miniature," is a linguistically diverse nation, reflecting the continent's complex cultural and ethnic mosaic. With over 250 indigenous languages from the Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic, and Nilo-Saharan families, Cameroon's linguistic diversity underscores the deep historical interactions, migrations, and exchanges that have shaped the nation. However, this linguistic wealth faces threats from the dominance of colonial languages (French and English), urbanization, globalization, and the limited integration of indigenous languages into formal systems like education and media (Echu, 2004; Tadadjeu, 1995).

This study examines the challenges facing language conservation in Cameroon and proposes sustainable strategies for preserving its multicultural languages. Key obstacles include the marginalization of local languages due to official language policies, the lack of language documentation, societal stigma, and insufficient government support (Anchimbe, 2006; Chumbow, 2009). For instance, the educational system heavily favours French and English, leaving indigenous languages with little to no presence in formal education. The urban migration patterns and intergenerational transmission breakdown further accelerate language shift, as younger generations increasingly adopt dominant languages (Matsinhe, 2013; Ndongu, 2015).

Through a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, this study documents the status of Cameroonian languages, investigates the factors contributing to language decline, and identifies community-led solutions for sustainable language conservation. Strategies such as integrating indigenous languages into the educational system, fostering community-driven documentation projects, leveraging digital tools, and increasing governmental policy support are recommended to preserve Cameroon's linguistic heritage. Additionally, partnerships with international organizations and technological initiatives, such as language apps and online dictionaries, are vital to revitalizing indigenous languages, especially among the youth (Brenzinger, 2007; Mba & Quinque, 2017).

Sustainable conservation of Cameroon's languages is vital for cultural preservation and national identity. Community-centered approaches can safeguard linguistic diversity for future generations, aligning with global preservation efforts (UNESCO, 2003; Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2022).

Introduction

Cameroon is a low-income country in the west Central Africa region. It is bordered by Nigeria to the west; Chad to the northeast, Central African Republic to the east; and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo to the south. Cameroon is a member of the Cemac zone one of the biggest countries in the sub region with a population of approximately 29,123,744 people with an annual growth rate of 2.6 percent in 2022. Cameroon is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with over 250 languages (Paschal, 2021). This diversity is both a cultural treasure and a challenge for language conservation. Languages in Cameroon belong primarily to the Niger-Congo and Afro-Asiatic families, with a few from the Nilo-Saharan family. Additionally, the uneven use of English and French as official languages in Cameroon is worrisome because it adversely impacts the policy of official language bilingualism. This linguistic wealth is threatened by factors such as globalization, urbanization, and the dominance of official languages (French and English). (Echu, G. 2004).

Cameroon is situated in the Gulf of Guinea in Central Africa. Due to its unique cultural, geographic, and climatic diversity, and its highly multilingual landscape, the country is often considered ‘Africa in miniature’. The inhabitants and ethnolinguistic communities that make up Cameroon have existed for many centuries before the colonial era led by Europeans in Africa, and like in all other parts of Africa, they had developed their various traditions and technologies to function in their natural habitats. For this article, our focus is on recent colonial history, mainly because Cameroon as a modern nation is the direct result of the European colonial enterprise in Africa. Cameroon was first visited by German explorers towards the end of the 19th Century. Later, a colonization of the territory started after the infamous Berlin Conference of 1885. Germany itself was unified as a country under Bismarck only briefly before 1871. However, German unification, a new power entered European politics, a power that also sought to establish its mark in the world by seeking its own colonial empire. Germany first tried to establish itself in Cameroon through treaties with some local rulers along the Cameroonian Atlantic coast. Though these local rulers were only a tiny portion of the dozens of local rulers that reigned across the territory of Cameroon at the time (Bartey, G. 2012).

This aspect was then used as a pretext for establishing colonial rule and a cruel plantation economy that relied largely on land dispossession and forced labor. The gradual German push inland met with considerable resistance, resistance which was quenched in several bloody military campaigns under the responsibility of governor Von Puttkammer, whose regime lasted until 1906 when the Germans were forced to relinquish their colonies after losing in World War I, local resistance had not yet been

broken completely. With the arrival of the French colonial masters, everything changed, and France gained Internal autonomy that was obtained in 1956. A smaller part of Cameroon was administered by the British, who used their administrative strategy of ‘indirect rule’. One part of the colonial UN trust territory of British Cameroons later became part of Nigeria. (Ngoh 1996). After independence in 1961, the challenge of leading this diverse country remained as it had been before, a large artificial national unity was imposed, in part through the one-party system under President Ahmadou Ahidjo’s Cameroon National Union. He was succeeded in 1982 by Paul Biya, who has ruled the country to this day. (Chiatoh & Kamdem 2010).

Objectives

The primary objectives of this thesis are to:

- I. Document the current state of languages in Cameroon.
- II. Identify the main challenges to language conservation.
- III. Propose sustainable strategies for preserving Cameroonian languages.

Research Questions

- I. What is the status of Cameroonian languages?
- II. What are the key threats to these languages?
- III. Which strategies can effectively promote sustainable language conservation in Cameroon?

Methodology

This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data on language use and demographics with qualitative insights from interviews and case studies of language conservation projects. Sources include academic literature, government reports, and survey conducted through an online questionnaire shared using WhatsApp.

Chapter 1

The Linguistic Diversity of West Africa

West Africa is a region of unparalleled linguistic diversity, home to an estimated 500 to 1,000 languages spoken across its countries. This linguistic richness is a product of the region's intricate history, characterized by waves of migration, trade, and cultural exchange over millennia. West Africa's languages belong to three major language families: Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic, and Nilo-Saharan, each contributing to the region's complex linguistic mosaic. The Niger-Congo language family is the most widespread in West Africa, covering a vast majority of the languages spoken in the region. This family includes major languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Wolof, as well as numerous Bantu languages that extend into Central and Southern Africa. Languages in the Niger-Congo family are known for their noun class systems and verb-focused morphology, making them some of the most linguistically complex languages globally (Williamson & Blench, 2000).

The Afro-Asiatic language family is primarily represented by the Chadic branch in West Africa, with Hausa being the most prominent language. Hausa functions as a lingua franca across much of the Sahel and is vital in commerce and communication. The Afro-Asiatic languages are distinct for their root-based morphology and the use of consonantal patterns to convey meaning (Greenberg, 1963). The Nilo-Saharan language family includes languages such as Kanuri and Songhay, spoken in the northern and Sahelian regions of West Africa. These languages are characterized by their complex tone systems and rich verbal morphology, further contributing to the region's linguistic diversity (Ehret, 2001).

West Africa's linguistic diversity is not only a result of its historical migrations and settlements but also of its dynamic sociopolitical environments. The region has been a hub of cultural interaction due to extensive trade networks, religious diffusion, and political changes. This interaction has led to widespread multilingualism and language contact phenomena, such as code-switching, borrowing, and the development of creoles and pidgins, which are now integral to the linguistic landscape (Batibo, 2005). Despite this diversity, many West African languages are increasingly under threat. Urbanization, the spread of global languages like English and French, and the dominance of colonial languages in education and government are contributing to language shift and endangerment. UNESCO has recognized several

languages in the region as endangered, highlighting the urgent need for language preservation efforts (UNESCO, 2003). In conclusion, West Africa's linguistic diversity is an essential aspect of the region's cultural and historical identity. Efforts to preserve and revitalize these languages are crucial, not only to protect linguistic diversity but also to maintain the cultural heritage embedded within these languages. Understanding this complex linguistic landscape can shed light on the historical and social forces that have shaped West Africa and underscore the importance of initiatives aimed at preserving this rich linguistic heritage for future generations.

The aim of this first chapter is to point out the linguistic features of Central and West Africa in general but more precisely Cameroon. Cameroon is known for having a great linguistic history over the years. Furthermore, this chapter will analyze Cameroon's particular linguistic diversity, which explains the origin of its two official languages, that is French and English, the origins of the major indigenous languages and some background knowledge about the population of this country. Thus, this chapter purposely creates a general awareness of this linguistic diversity. To understand these linguistic features better, a background analysis will be carried out as seen in the following sections.

1.1 The Historical Background of Central Africa

The region of Central Africa includes 11 countries: Angola, Burundi, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Sao Tomé and Príncipe. The region has a total population of about 160 million with the Democratic Republic of Congo accounting for nearly half of this. These eleven countries are members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), while six of these West African countries, including Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Central African Republic, and the Republic of Congo, are also members of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and share a common currency (the Central African CFA franc). Central Africa is a subregion of the African continent comprising various countries according to different definitions. The main economic activities of Central Africa are farming, herding and fishing. (European Union, 2022).

This region is not only known to have eleven countries but is primarily inhabited by Native African or Bantu people and the Mongo, Kongo and Luba peoples. Aside these inhabitants, Central Africa also has language families which include many Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Congo and Ubangian

communities. The area's rich linguistic diversity involves the use of lingua Franca, born of local languages and pidgin creoles. Based on the historical point of view, one can say that the interconnectedness of Central and West Africa does not only end at the level of historical background but extends to the cultural background, the reason being that in both regions we find the same language groups originating and generated through historical migration settlements mainly for urbanization purposes. (Birmingham, 2024).

1.2 The Linguistic Landscape of Cameroon

1.2.1 Historical Overview

A Linguistic landscape refers to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in each territory or region (Landry and Bourhis 1997: 25). Cameroon is generally considered part of the central part of Africa and well known for having a high level of multiculturalism. To start with, the word 'multiculturalism' in this case implies the existence of different and uneven power relations among populations in terms of racial, ethnic, religious, geographical distinctions and other cultural markers that deviate from dominant, often racialized norms (Chin, 2020).

However, the situation of Cameroon's linguistic diversity clearly matches the above definition, as it stems from its complex history of migration, trade, and colonialism. Pre-colonial interactions among various ethnic groups laid the foundations for a multilingual society. During the colonial era in the 1880s, Britain, France and Germany were the major colonizers who scrambled over Cameroon resulting in the complete ownership of Cameroon by Britain and France. As a starting point, we must briefly describe the relationship between English and French, as the official languages, and Cameroon's indigenous languages. In the Cameroonian academic literature, mother tongues and indigenous languages are also known as 'national languages. Currently, they tend to be used exclusively in family contexts, in social and private life, and daily community interactions such as local trade, social intra-ethnic events, and traditional community activities (Tadadjeu, 1980). Official languages are languages used in daily administration and communication in public entities, in official public media such as state television, the national radio, and the printed press (Kamdem, 2010).

Another important domain of exclusive use of official languages is the education system (both in private and public schools). People interacting with any government branch or department are expected to use the official language of the region; workers in the civil service are required to use official languages in their dealings with the citizens; and families and parents can only use French

and English in their written documentation and interaction with state institutions at all levels (Chiatoh, 2014). These two official languages, English and French, were adopted into the Cameroonian system in 1916 when Britain and France took over Cameroon from the Germans. The new colonial masters then sought to impose their languages on the newly acquired territory both in the areas of education and administration. The German colonial period (1884-1916) and its subsequent division of Cameroon's territory between France and Britain is said to have further complicated the linguistic landscape. The introduction of these European languages English and French as official mediums of communication gradually impacted the original linguistic diversity of Cameroon. (Echu, 2003). Regarding the implementation of the policy of official language bilingualism, there is a clear imbalance of the use of the two languages as French continues to be the dominant means of communication while English is relegated to second place within the state. However, setting aside the overwhelming status of French in many societal domains, English in the Cameroon's linguistic landscape is both informational and symbolic while retaining the function as a medium of modernity, globalization and internationalization, (Pütz, 2020.) One could assume that the inferior status of Cameroon's indigenous languages reflects a higher level of language conflict in Cameroon that could probably cause an inferiority complex.

Moreover, the linguistic situation of Cameroon could stimulate the notion that Cameroon is linguistically dependent on western Europe and politically independent. Apart from English and French, there is another language called Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) commonly used in the whole of Africa especially for commercial and day-to-day services. This language in Cameroon is considered a lingua franca so because it is used in urban as well as rural areas. CPE facilitates communication because it is a day-to-day language. As a matter of fact, it is considered informal language which is not allowed in institutions and government offices. (Anchimbe, 2013).

1.2.2 Major Language Families

Cameroon is one of the countries in Central Africa that is known for its incredible linguistic landscape diversity with over 250 indigenous languages spoken amongst indigenes. These estimated 250 languages are divided into different language families. (Kum,2021) The major language families and their estimated percentages of the population are as follows.

The Niger-Congo Language Family:

The Niger-Congo family is one of the largest language families considering the population and the subgroup.

- Percentage: Approximately 75% of the population.
- Subgroup: Primarily Bantu languages, but also includes Grass fields languages.

The Afro-Asiatic Language Family:

- Percentage: Around 20% of the population.
- Subgroup: Mainly Chadic languages.
- Languages: prominent languages include Fulfulde, Hausa and Kotoko.

The Nilo-Saharan Language Family:

- Percentage: Roughly 2-3% of the population.
- Languages: Kanuri is the most significant language in this family within Cameroon.
- Percentage: The remaining 2-3% of the population speak various smaller or less well documented languages that do not fit neatly into these major families. (Echu, G. 2004).

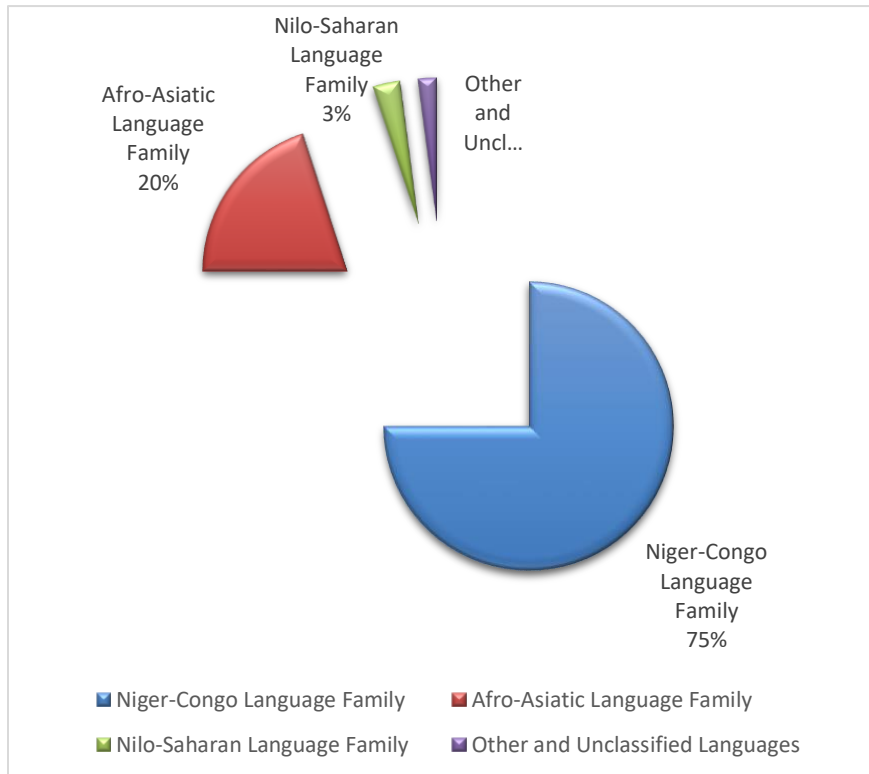


Figure 1: Estimated Percentages and Major Language Families in Cameroon (Source: <https://www.ethnologue.com>)

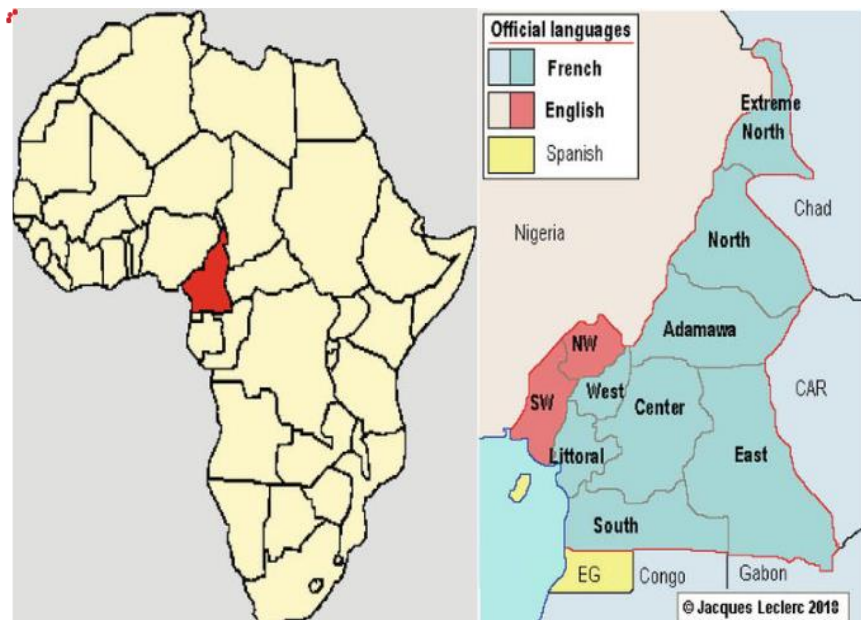


Figure 2: Current Ethnicity of Cameroon (source: <https://www.ethnologue.com>)

Cameroon has a unique culture as seen from its architecture, local food, folk ceremonies, arts and crafts and its social organization. Cameroon’s unique culture is derived from its 10 regions that were

formally called 'provinces' before Decree No. 2008/376 of 12 November 2008 (Kum, 2021). These regions include Adamawa Region, Centre Region, Far North Region, Littoral Region, North Region, Northwest Region, West Region, Southwest Region, South Region and Sout west Region. However, these regions have different cultural backgrounds and different languages as well as French and English, such as Bamileke, a semi-Bantu community in Cameroon with origins from group of Cameroon, making up roughly a fourth of the country's population. The Kirdi have many cultures and ethnic groups who inhabit northwestern Cameroon and northeastern Nigeria. The term was applied to various ethnic groups who refused to convert to Islam after the Islamic conquests of the region. The name Kirdi means pagan and was used to refer to a group of people who refused to join the Islamic faith. The group makes up 18% of the total population. (Kum, A. 2021).

Furthermore, there are also the Bassa as one of the ethnic groups in the Cameroon Highlands, which constitute 38% of the total population. The coastal tropical forest peoples, including the Douala, are part of the Bantu ethnic group of Cameroon. They primarily inhabit the littoral and southwest region of Cameroon and form a portion of the Sawabantu or coastal people of Cameroon. The Fulani Family is also one of the Muslim ethnic groups in Cameroon belonging to the Western Highlands group. This group of people are inhabitants of the northern region. The Beti-Pahuin is a Bantu ethnic group located in the central region of Cameroon.

Though the people of Cameroon separate themselves into several individual clans, they all share a common origin, history and culture. In the southern tropical forest, ethnic groups include the Ewondo, Bulu, and Fang all Beti subgroups, the Makaa and Pygmies officially called Bakas. The capital city of Cameroon is in the Centre Region (Yaoundé) and the population of this area represents 25.8% of the population of the country. The people of this area include Ewondo, Eton, Fang, Bulu, Bafia, Massa and Bassa. Their languages come from the Bantu language family. (Benneh, & Delancey, 2024.)

Furthermore, some ethnologists including (Echu, G. & Kum, P. 2021.) talked about the difference between language and dialect. According to them, social, cultural and political features are frequently added to intelligibility to distinguish a language from a dialect. Social and cultural aspects also play a prominent role when it comes to language status. Generally, languages are dialects that have succeeded politically, economically and militarily impose themselves on a people. For this reason, there is need for a reclassification of the Cameroonian local languages. This will scale down on the number of languages in Cameroon because many of these are varieties of a language. From a linguistic point of view, the distinction between language and dialect is arbitrary so needs another

round of classification. (kum, A. 2021).

1.3 Summary

The overall aim of this chapter was to create an awareness of the linguistic diversity of West and Central Africa and how they obtained their linguistic landscape. This chapter pointed out the key aspects of Cameroon's cultural diversity including the main official languages, that is English and French, the 250 native languages and their language families. It did not only create awareness of the different ethnicity with the illustration of maps, but also explained the origin of these ethnic groups. From the above sections, many doubts have been clarified about bilingualism in Cameroon and how it is related to the European colonies in the 1880s. Furthermore, it also highlights some challenges facing these indigenous languages, which will be further explained.

Chapter 2

Challenges and strategies for language conservation

This chapter is aimed at pinpointing the challenges facing Cameroon's indigenous languages due to the adoption of French and English language as official languages. These challenges are commonly faced in different areas such as educational, political and social sectors. This chapter does not only aim at highlighting these challenges but goes further to suggest possible measures that could be taken into consideration to bring back or to preserve and maintain indigenous languages.

2.1 Challenges facing language conservation in Cameroon

Cameroon is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with over 250 languages spoken across its territory. This diversity reflects the country's complex ethnic composition and cultural richness. However, the preservation of these languages faces several significant challenges, threatening the survival of many indigenous languages. These challenges include the dominance of official languages, urbanization and migration, lack of documentation, educational policies, and insufficient governmental support.

Cameroon is officially bilingual, with French and English serving as the country's official languages. This bilingualism, inherited from the colonial period, has led to the marginalization of indigenous languages in formal domains such as education, government, and media (Anchimbe, 2006). As a result, many Cameroonians, particularly the younger generation, do not find it necessary to learn their native languages but instead they are increasingly prioritizing French and English over their native language. This factor has led to language shift and erosion of linguistic diversity (Mforteh, 2006) impacting the linguistic knowledge of both the younger and older generations. The emphasis on French and English in education and professional settings has further diminished the status and use of indigenous languages. Rapid urbanization and internal migration in Cameroon have also contributed to the decline of indigenous languages. As people move from rural areas to cities in search of better economic opportunities, including jobs, schools etc. During this migration process, to adapt to the new environment or attain their objectives, most migrants are compelled to learn new languages and since only official languages are used in institutions, they often adopt the most dominant languages, such as French, English, or a regional lingua franca such as Pidgin English, to integrate into urban life. This shift leads to the gradual abandonment of their native languages, particularly among younger generations (Batibo, 2005). Additionally, in urban areas, where diverse

ethnic groups coexist, communication often occurs in widely spoken languages, reducing the need for native languages and accelerating their decline (Echu, 2003).

Many of Cameroon's indigenous languages remain undocumented or poorly documented, which poses a significant challenge for language conservation efforts. The lack of written records, dictionaries, grammar books, and educational materials hampers efforts to teach and revitalize these languages (Tadadjeu, 1995). Without documentation, it becomes difficult to preserve linguistic knowledge and pass it on to future generations, increasing the risk of language extinction. Moreover, limited linguistic research on these languages further exacerbates the problem, as many languages may disappear before they are fully studied and understood (Brenzinger, 2007).

The educational system in Cameroon predominantly favors the official languages, with French and English being the primary languages of instruction from the early stages of schooling. Indigenous languages are often excluded from formal education, reducing their status and utility in the eyes of younger generations (Ndongo, 2015). Although there have been some efforts to incorporate local languages into the education system, these initiatives are often sporadic, underfunded, and lack the necessary support from both the government and local communities (Matsinhe, 2013). The absence of a coherent and consistent policy on multilingual education significantly hampers the efforts to conserve indigenous languages. Governmental support for language conservation in Cameroon is often limited and inconsistent. While there are policies that recognize the importance of indigenous languages, the implementation of these policies is weak, and resources allocated to language preservation are often inadequate (Chumbow, 2009). The lack of political will and the absence of a comprehensive language policy that actively promotes the use and preservation of indigenous languages contribute to their gradual decline. Moreover, there is a need for greater collaboration between government agencies, local communities, and international organizations to effectively address the challenges of language conservation (Fonlon, 1969).

In Cameroon, many indigenous languages are often viewed as less prestigious compared to the official languages of French and English. This social stigma can discourage speakers from using their native languages in public settings or even within their families. The perception that indigenous languages are associated with poverty, lack of education, and rural life can lead individuals, especially younger people, to abandon their languages in favor of more dominant languages that are seen as gateways to better social and economic opportunities (Mforteh, 2006). This shift not only impacts language use but also undermines cultural identity and pride among speakers.

The global media landscape, dominated by English and French, plays a significant role in shaping language preferences among Cameroonians. The proliferation of television, radio, and internet content in these languages further marginalizes indigenous languages. Young people are influenced by global pop culture, which primarily features content in English and French. This exposure leads to a preference for these languages over native languages, contributing to language shift (Echu, 2003). Moreover, the lack of online presence and digital resources in indigenous languages limits their visibility and accessibility in the digital age.

The intergenerational transmission of languages is crucial for their survival. In many Cameroonian families, there is a noticeable decline in the use of indigenous languages among parents when communicating with their children. As parents increasingly prioritize French or English for their children's education and socialization, the native languages are not passed down effectively. This breakdown in transmission results in a loss of linguistic knowledge and cultural heritage, as children grow up without a strong connection to their ancestral languages (Batibo, 2005). Consequently, the younger generations may become monolingual in official languages, leading to the eventual extinction of their mother tongues.

Efforts to conserve indigenous languages often lack grassroots support and community involvement. Many language preservation initiatives are top-down approaches driven by external organizations or government agencies without sufficient input from local communities. Without active participation and ownership from the speakers themselves, these initiatives are less likely to succeed (Ndongo, 2015). Local communities possess valuable knowledge about their languages and cultures, and their involvement is essential for developing effective language revitalization strategies. Failure to engage communities can lead to resistance or apathy toward language conservation efforts.

Instability and conflict in certain regions of Cameroon, particularly in the Anglophone regions, have created additional challenges for language conservation. The ongoing crisis has led to displacement, disruption of educational systems, and a breakdown of social cohesion, all of which negatively affect language transmission and preservation efforts (Matsinhe, 2013). In conflict-affected areas, the focus shifts to immediate survival and safety, leaving little room for cultural and linguistic preservation. Furthermore, the division between language groups can lead to tensions and further marginalization of indigenous languages, complicating efforts to foster unity and promote multilingualism.

To sum it all, the challenges facing language conservation in Cameroon are complex and multifaceted, involving social, educational, political, and technological factors. Addressing these

issues requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach that recognizes the value of linguistic diversity and promotes the active participation of communities in conservation efforts. Through concerted action from the government, educational institutions, and local communities, it is possible to develop strategies that enhance the visibility and use of indigenous languages, ensuring their survival for future generations.

2.2 Strategies for language conservation In Cameroon

Language conservation in Cameroon involves many factors hindering such initiatives as mentioned above, yet there are some possible solutions to improve the current situation. First, there is the engagement of local communities: language conservation efforts need to be community-driven, involving native speakers in documentation and preservation activities. When we talk of community involvement and empowerment, we are referring to the participation of native speakers; this might be through the creation of small groups with the aim of launching activities in native languages that can encourage the mastery and use of indigenous languages. Local language committees can take the lead in these initiatives. There can also be community-led documentation: training community members to document their languages through recording oral histories, folklore, and cultural practices help preserve the language in its authentic form. For example, the Grass Fields Language Preservation Project has empowered local communities in the Grass Fields region of Cameroon to document and revitalize their languages (Chiatoh, 2012).

Bilingual education programs are also worth mentioning. Introducing indigenous languages into the formal education system, alongside French and English, helps sustain these languages. This approach ensures that children learn their mother tongue from an early age and become masters of their own native languages. Integrating indigenous languages into education has other additional advantages such as those related to identity. Creating teaching materials and training educators to use indigenous languages in classrooms also strengthens language transmission among younger generations. For example, the Cameroon National Curriculum for Mother Tongue-Based Education has incorporated several indigenous languages, fostering their continued use (Mba and Quinque, 2017).

Digital tools and resources also have a role to play creating mobile apps, online dictionaries, and e-learning platforms for indigenous languages makes them more accessible to a broader audience, especially the youth. Such measures could be the fastest in promoting language conservation since they are always affordable and accessible without people having to migrate from place to place. The use of indigenous languages on social media platforms can increase their visibility and use in daily

communication. For instance, the development of apps for languages like Ewondo and Basaa has proved effective in engaging urban young people who may not otherwise have access to traditional language learning (Nana, 2014).

National language policies are also of fundamental importance: without government support and encouragement, native language conservation programs might be slow to spread. The reason is that many Cameroonian citizens depend on the government for validity, and without this validation many will not see it needful to practice their languages and this might lead to the loss of cultural identification. The government should recognize and protect all indigenous languages through comprehensive language policies that support language education, media use, and public communication in these languages. Furthermore, enacting laws that protect linguistic rights and promote the use of indigenous languages in public life is crucial for their sustainability. For example, while the Cameroonian Constitution acknowledges cultural diversity, more robust and enforceable language policies are needed to ensure practical support for all indigenous languages (Echu, 2004).

Supporting radio, television, and print media that operate in indigenous languages can normalize their use in public discourse and entertainment. This method of media and cultural promotion seems very effective, because it will enable those who know little or nothing about their culture to participate in these television and radio programs even through debates, reports in their languages. In addition, promoting indigenous languages can also be done through cultural festivals; storytelling sessions and language competitions help keep these languages vibrant and relevant. For example, community radio stations in Cameroon, broadcasting in local languages, have been instrumental in sustaining linguistic diversity (Tabi Manga, 2000).

International collaboration is also one of main methods of language preservation, not only within but also without. Collaborating with organizations such as UNESCO can provide the resources and expertise needed to support language conservation initiatives. Moreover, securing funding from international bodies and NGOs to support language documentation, education, and technology development is crucial for long-term sustainability. In addition, the Endangered Languages Project has facilitated funding and technical support for the preservation of several Cameroonian languages (Brenzinger, 2012). Promoting cultural activities that celebrate indigenous languages, and their associated traditions is essential for revitalization. Organizing cultural festivals, traditional storytelling sessions, and art exhibitions can foster pride in linguistic heritage. For example, local cultural associations can work to highlight the importance of their languages through dance, music,

and theater, engaging the community in ways that reinforce the relevance of their linguistic identity (Batibo, 2005). Such initiatives can also attract younger generations to participate and learn more about their languages and cultures. As regards training and capacity building for languages, investing in training programs for language activists, educators, and community leaders is crucial for effective language conservation. By equipping these individuals with the necessary skills in language documentation, teaching methodologies, and advocacy, communities can better manage and promote their languages. Workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs can provide practical knowledge on how to effectively engage with language conservation efforts. For example, language activists trained through NGOs can lead local efforts to promote bilingual education and cultural preservation (Echu, 2003).

Encouraging academic research on Cameroon's indigenous languages can aid in the preservation and revitalization of these languages. Universities and research institutions can partner with local communities to conduct linguistic surveys, develop grammar, and create comprehensive dictionaries. This collaboration can result in valuable documentation that not only supports language preservation but also contributes to the understanding of linguistic diversity in Cameroon. The establishment of language research centers dedicated to the study and promotion of indigenous languages can further enhance these efforts (Tadadjeu, 1995). Establishing networks among speakers of indigenous languages can enhance cooperation and support for language conservation initiatives. By creating alliances between different linguistic communities, they can share resources, experiences, and best practices for language preservation. These networks can also facilitate joint initiatives, such as community language workshops and cross-cultural exchanges, promoting mutual understanding and respect for linguistic diversity. For instance, forming a national council for indigenous languages in Cameroon could provide a unified platform to advocate for language rights and conservation efforts (Mba and Quinque, 2017).

Integrating indigenous languages into public administration and governmental communication can reinforce their importance in society. By encouraging the use of local languages in government documents, public signage, and community announcements, the status of these languages can be elevated. This practice not only validates indigenous languages but also ensures that they remain relevant in public life. Moreover, training public servants to communicate in local languages can enhance service delivery and foster inclusivity within diverse communities. For example, providing translation services and resources in indigenous languages can help bridge the gap between government and local populations (Chumbow, 2009).

To sum it up, this chapter has helped identify the challenges facing the conservation of indigenous language in Cameroon since the 1960s till the present date. It did not only identify these problems but also explained the reasons why native language conservation is yet to be successful. Furthermore, this chapter, talked about strategies that could help promote and conserve these languages in Cameroon. Implementing these strategies requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including government bodies, community leaders, educators, and international organizations. In a nutshell, ensuring the survival of indigenous languages not only preserves cultural heritage but also strengthens national identity and social cohesion in this linguistically diverse country.

Chapter 3

Case study the languages of Cameroon

To further analyze this paper, a survey was carried out through, and online questionnaire formulated on google form questions consisting of 10 multiple choice closed questions shared through WhatsApp groups to freshmen students at the university of Bamenda Cameroon, to friends and family members. The first part of this questionnaire was focus on the point of view of individuals concerning Cameroon's indigenous languages how important they could be. While the second part of this questionnaire is revolved on the possible solutions on how these indigenous languages could be promoted.

3.1 The Survey Approach

Those who participated were 104 in number and both male and female French and English Cameroonian speakers. Amongst these participants there were 64 females and 40 males ranging between 20-30 years old. Quantitative methods to collect data to address these specified research questions. The 10 multiple choice questions used for this study can be seen below.

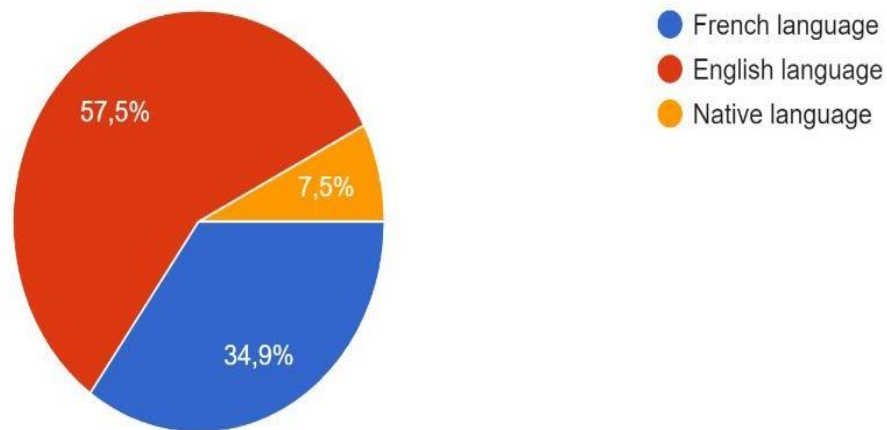
1. Which languages do you speak fluently?
2. How important do you believe it is to preserve and promote indigenous languages in Cameroon?
3. Do you think the use of indigenous languages is decreasing in your community?
4. Are there any active programs or initiatives in your community aimed at preserving indigenous languages?
5. How effective do you think current language preservation programs are in your community?
6. Which strategies do you think are most important for sustainable language conservation in Cameroon?
7. What role should the government play in supporting language conservation efforts?
8. How can technology best be used to support the preservation of indigenous languages?
9. What do you perceive as the main barrier to effective language preservation in your community?
10. What additional support or resources would be most helpful in promoting language conservation?

3.2 Result Analysis

3.2.1 Figure 1:

1) Which languages do you speak fluently?

106 risposte

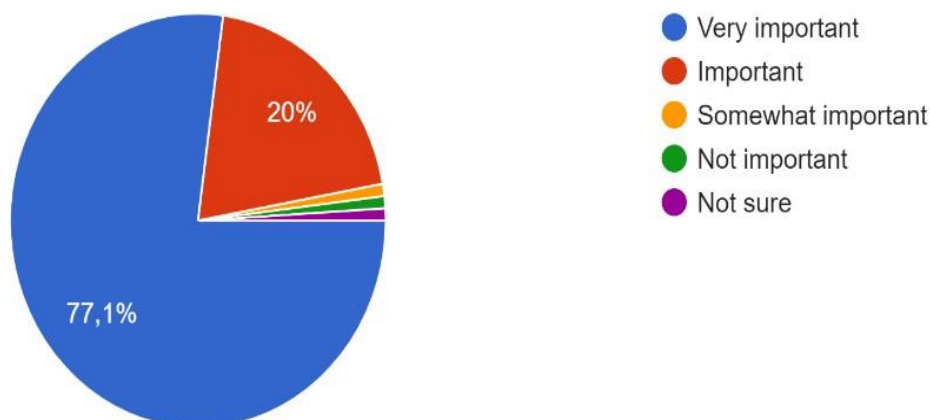


The very first question that was asked during the survey process was “which languages do you speak fluently”. This question was asked to determine the language IQ of those participating, identifying their mother tongue or their fluency in their major language. According to the results 57.5% of those who participated identified themselves more in English Language meanwhile 34.9% identified themselves in French Language. This mean that the Majority of those who participated in the survey were English speaking Cameroonians. Surprisingly just a few people about 7.5% are speakers of native language giving the notion that Cameroon is a bilingual country in terms of official language excluding native languages clearly indicating that indigenous languages are marginalized are marginalized.

3.2.2 Figure 2:

2) How important do you believe it is to preserve and promote indigenous languages in Cameroon?

105 risposte

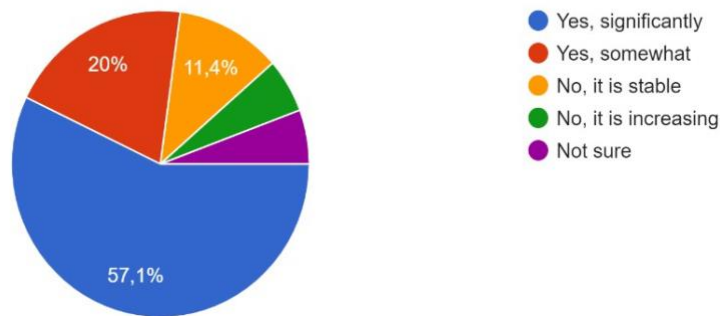


According to the second graph, the results indicate the level of importance preserving and promoting indigenous languages. Those surveyed have been asked how important it is to promote indigenous languages. Regarding the analysis, 77.1% believed it is very important to preserve and promote native languages and their response was quite impressive. It is certain that 77.1% acknowledged the importance of one's native language despite the presence of other languages in each community. Meanwhile, 20% of those surveyed believed indigenous languages are important, their response was not really emphasized unlike the majority. It should be noted that even though Cameroon has two main official languages French and English Language, indigenous or native language should not be completely wiped off from the system to maintain the value.

3.2.3 Figure 3:

3) Do you think the use of indigenous languages is decreasing in your community?

105 risposte



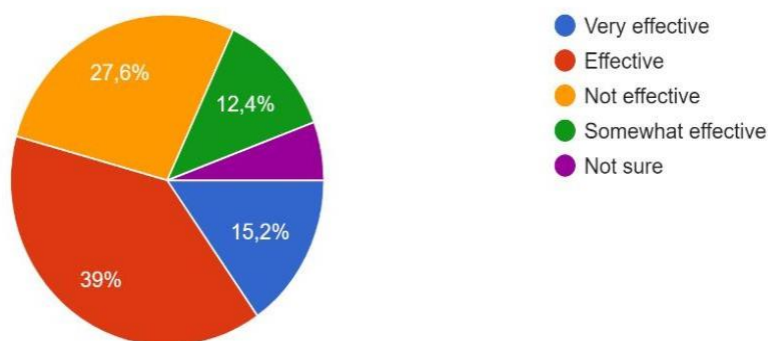
Based on the above, one can say that the response of those surveyed was unexpected, this is because they were of different opinions based on the question being asked. They were asked “Do you think the use of indigenous languages is decreasing in your community?”. Regarding their responses, 57.1% of those surveyed strongly believe that the use of indigenous language is decreasing in the community.

On the other hand, 20% of the participants were uncertain because their response was “somewhat” giving the sense of uncertainty. To further analysis. 11.4% of the participants affirmed that indigenous languages in Cameroon is stable meaning there have not been any decrease in the usage of these languages., So far, we can see that these respondents have different point of views. Concluding on the response of the 11.4% of those who participated in this study, it is clearly seen that they have maintained their native languages despite the presence of French and English language in Cameroon reason why they did not notice the decrease of the indigenous Languages in the community.

3.2.4 Figure 4:

4) How effective do you think current language preservation programs are in your community?

105 risposte

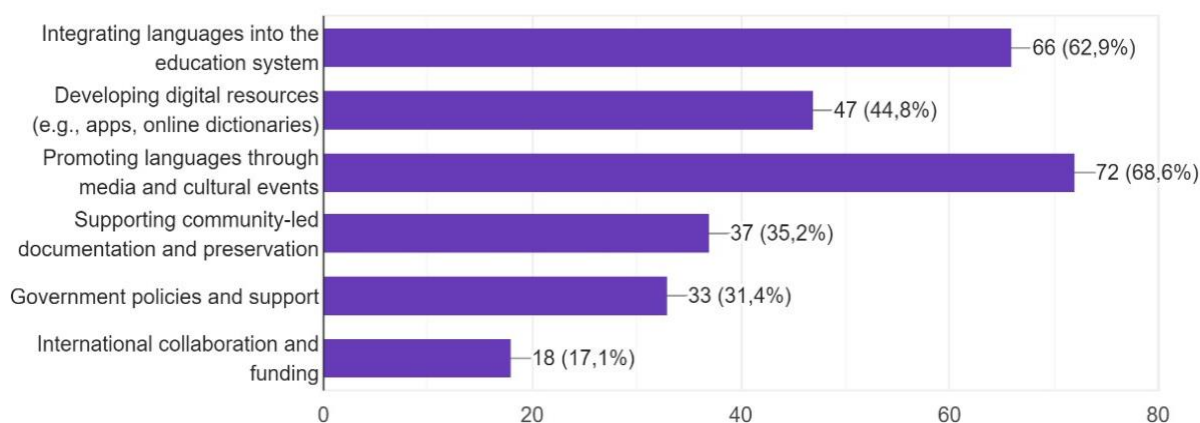


According to figure 4, those surveyed were asked “How effective do you think current language preservation programs are in your community?”. Their responses illustrate their point of view. The reason being that many of them, 39%, claimed that language preservation programs are effective in their community. Meanwhile 27.6% of them are on the contrary asserting these programs are not effective in their community. The secondary majority, which is 15.2% of these participants strongly believe that language preservation programs are very effective unlike the other 12.4% who are likely not fully convinced about the effectiveness of these programs. We can say that these responses represent different points of view depending on various experiences.

3.2.5 Figure 5:

5) Which strategies do you think are most important for sustainable language conservation in Cameroon? (Select all that apply.)

105 risposte



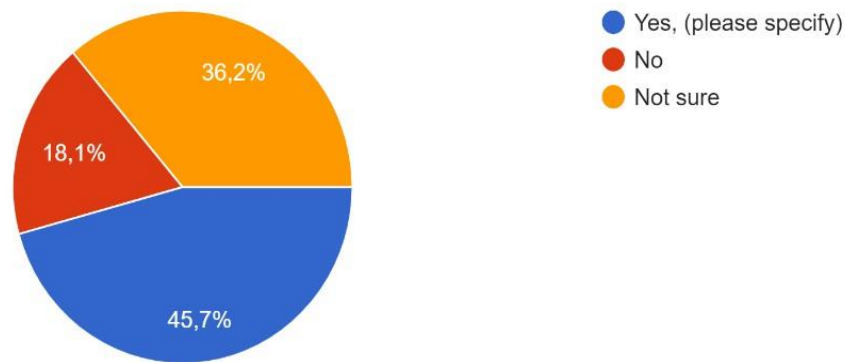
strategies they think is the most important for sustainable language conservation in Cameroon. Their choices were quite impressive because 66 of them (62.9%) suggested that integrating language into the education system was the best option for language conservation while, 47 people (44.8%) preferred the development of digital resources such as apps and online dictionaries etc. Furthermore, 72 of these participants, most of them (68.6,) are of the view that promoting languages through media and cultural events will be more effective on language conservation.

On the other hand, 37 participants (35.2%) suggested supporting community -led documentation and preservation could stimulate the language preservation concert. The secondary minority, (31.4%) opted for government policies and support and the least of them all (17.1%) believed that international collaboration and funding could possibly be the best option.

3.2.6 Figure 6:

6) Are there any initiatives in your community aimed at preserving indigenous Language?

105 risposte

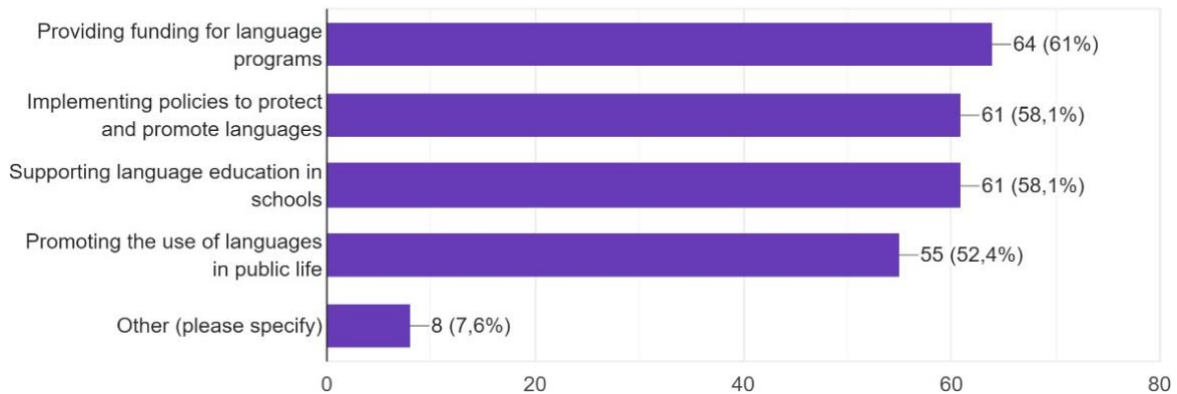


The data analyses further investigated the certainty about language preservation. Those interviewed were asked “Are there any initiative in your community aimed at preserving indigenous languages?” most of them (45.7%) asserted with a yes affirming their certainty while (36.6%) are not very sure if there ae any initiatives for language preservation and then (18.1%) negated if there were any. This shows that measures taken to preserve language conservation has not yet been fully manifested all over Cameroon. It might also be that those who negated are resided in the rural areas of Cameroon that might have limited the speed of these initiatives.

3.2.7 Figure 7:

7) What role should the government play in supporting language conservation efforts? (Select all that apply.)

105 risposte

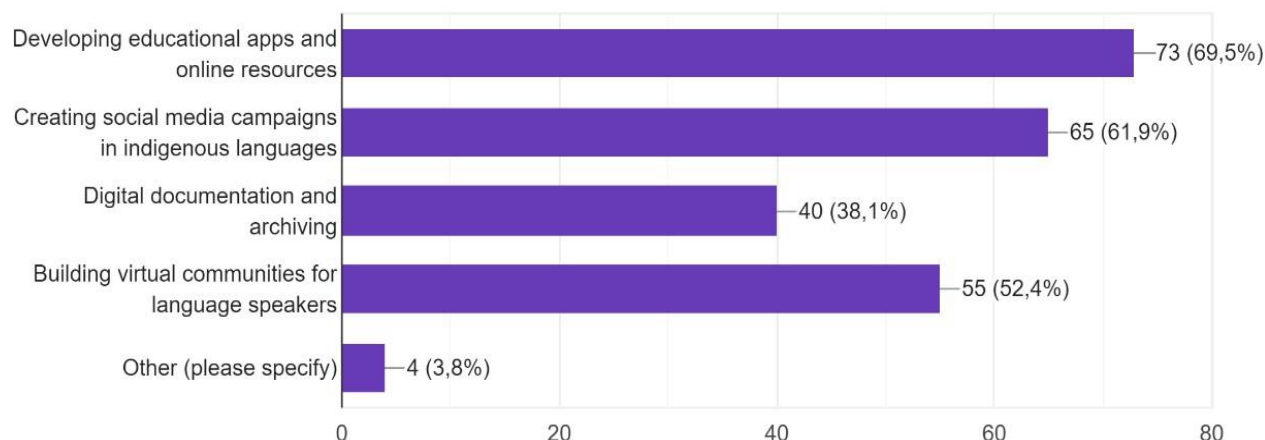


The above data illustrates the thought of participants giving their point of view on what role the government should play in supporting language conservation. Most of them had different suggestions, for instance, 61% suggested the provision of funds for language programs whereas 58.1% preferred implementation of policies and supporting language education in schools while the rest of them, 52.4% shared their thoughts on promoting language usage in public life, for day-to-day use.

3.2.8 Figure 8:

8) How can technology best be used to support the preservation of indigenous languages? (Select all that apply.)

105 risposte

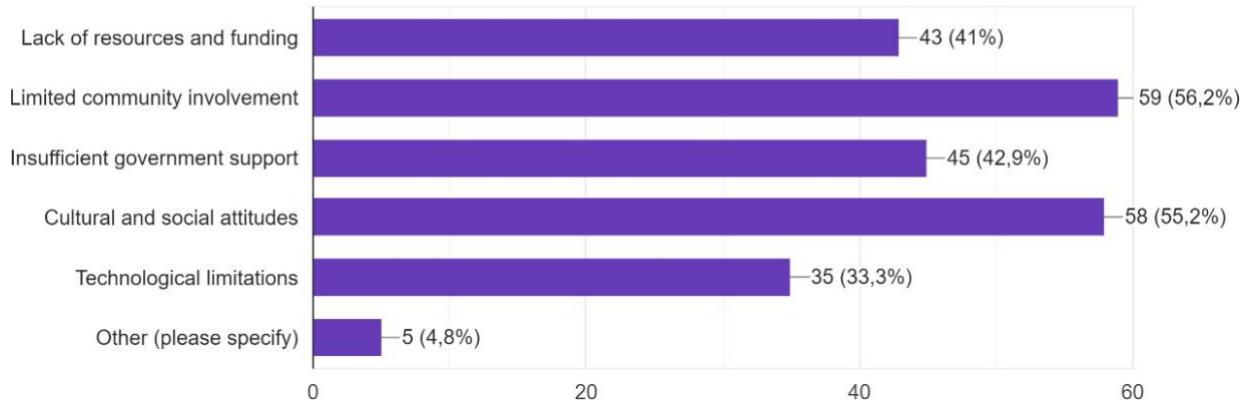


“How can technology best be used to support the preservation of indigenous languages?” This was the eighth question asked during this study, it was purposely asked with the aim of investing in technology in language preservation. The responses were impressive looking at the above graph with the perception that technology has a vital role to play. 73 participants out of 106 who participated share the view of developing educational apps and online resources, so as 65 of them preferred the creation of social media campaigns in indigenous languages. Furthermore, 55 others opted for the building of virtual communities for language speakers. It was concluded with the minority of those interviewed sharing the opinion that digital documentation and archiving could play a great role in the support for language conservation.

3.2.9 Figure 9:

9) What do you perceive as the main barriers to effective language preservation in your community?
(Select all that apply.)

105 response

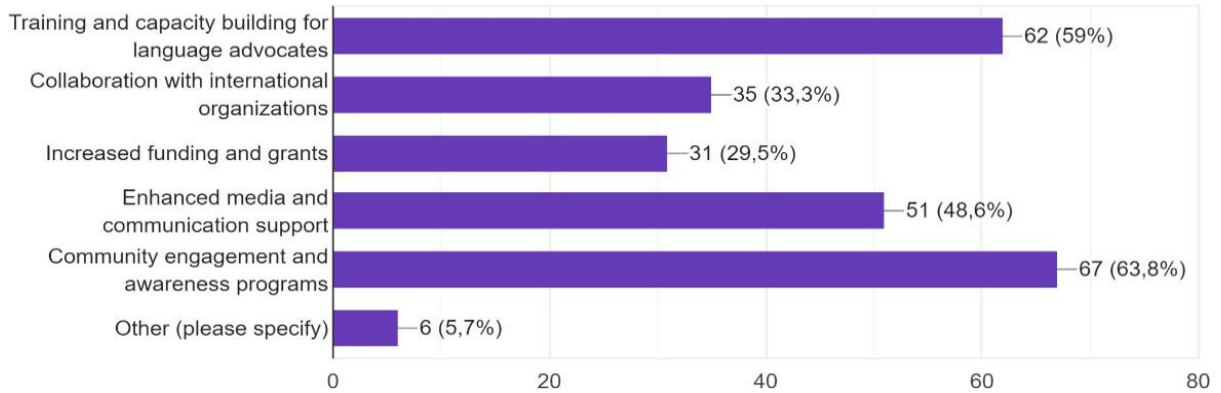


This survey was not only aimed at identifying languages, neither did it end at the level of suggesting measures that could be taken to promote and preserve language conservation, but it is proceeding up to the level of identifying barriers that could hinder this language preservation program. To get different opinions, Participants were asked “what do you perceive as the main barriers to effective language preservation in your community?”, looking at their responses, most of them that 56% pointed out limited community involvement, while 55.2% mentioned cultural and social attitude as one of the barriers hindering language preservation. Apart from that, 42.9% of others identified insufficient government support as one of the limitations. The investigation continued as 41% of participants talked of lack of resources and fundings. Concludingly, very few of them, 33.33%, highlighted technological limitations.

3.2.10 Figure 10:

10) What additional support or resources would be most helpful in promoting language conservation? (Select all that apply.)

105 risposte



To sum it all up, this survey was concluded when those interviewed were asked to talk about additional support or resources that could be helpful in promoting language conservation apart from the measures mentioned in the above figures. Their suggestions were seemingly to the already mentioned. 62 of those surveyed talked of training and capacity building for language advocates, whereas 67 others suggested community engagement and awareness programs. Unlike the 51 of them who pointed out the enhancement media and communication support. The secondary minority of about 35 people preferred collaborations with international organizations and the last 31 participants shared the view of increasing funds and grants.

Results and Discussion

The linguistic landscape of Cameroon is marked by profound diversity, with over 250 languages spoken. Ethnologue (2021) categorizes these languages into several families, predominantly Niger-Congo and Afro-Asiatic. Many of these languages are classified as endangered due to various socio-political and economic pressures. The sociolinguistic survey revealed that about 50% of languages are spoken by fewer than 1,000 individuals, indicating a significant risk of extinction. Moreover, the dominance of French and English in official domains has led to a decline in the intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages, contributing to a diminishing linguistic ecosystem.

Table 1: Overview of Language Families in Cameroon

Language Family	Number of Languages	Endangered Languages (%)
Niger-Congo	200+	40
Afro-Asiatic	30	30
Nilo-Saharan	5	20
Total	250+	40

This data underscores the urgent need for intervention strategies to promote sustainable language conservation. Also, according to the results of the survey carried out amongst students, family members and friends, figure 3 elaborated the point of view of whether the use of native languages is increasing or decreasing. Their response was unexpected.

Regarding their responses, 57.1% of those surveyed strongly believe that the use of indigenous language is decreasing in the community. On the other hand, 20% of the participants were uncertain because their response was “somewhat” giving the sense of uncertainty. To further analysis, 11.4% of the participants affirmed that indigenous languages in Cameroon is stable meaning there have not been any decrease in the usage of these languages. So far, we can see that these respondents have different points of

view.

Concluding on their responses, 11.4% of those who participated affirming that indigenous languages in Cameroon are stable, this clearly indicates that they have maintained their native languages despite the presence of French and English language in Cameroon reason why they did not notice the decrease of the indigenous Languages in the community. This analysis clearly matches with ethnologies Tadadjeu's affirmation in 1980 when he asserted that indigenous languages tend to be used exclusively in family contexts, in social private life, and daily community interactions such as local trade, social intra-ethnic events, and traditional community activities which means that indigenous languages in Cameroon are unevenly used as compared to French and English Language.

Furthermore, this paper as well analyzed the second research question which is "What are the key threats to these languages?" as already mentioned in the above paragraphs, The primary challenges to language conservation in Cameroon stem from both external and internal factors for example:

- **Globalization and Urbanization:** As urban centers expand; indigenous populations increasingly adopt dominant languages for socio-economic mobility. This shift leads to a decline in the use of local languages in favor of French and English, further eroding linguistic diversity. Additionally, in urban areas, where diverse ethnic groups coexist, communication often occurs in widely spoken languages, reducing the need for native languages and accelerating their decline (Echu, 2003).

- **Educational Policies:** The current educational system predominantly favors the official languages, which hampers the teaching and learning of local languages. Schools often lack resources to implement bilingual or multilingual education programs, creating a systemic bias against indigenous languages as earlier mentioned this bilingualism, inherited from the colonial period, has led to the marginalization of indigenous languages in formal domains such as education, government, and media (Anchimbe, 2006).

- **Cultural Perception:** Many Cameroonians view indigenous languages as inferior, leading to a stigma associated with their use. This perception discourages young people

from speaking their native languages and reduces the motivation to learn and preserve them.

In addition to these factors, the survey also pinpointed more on these challenges, for instance figure 9, the participants were asked “what do you perceive as the main barriers to effective language preservation in your community?” looking at their responses, most of them that is ; 56% pointed out limited community involvement, while 55.2% mentioned cultural and social attitude as one of the barriers hindering language preservation. Apart from that, 42.9% of others identified insufficient government support as one of the limitations. The investigation continued as 41% of participants talked of lack of resources and fundings. Concludingly, very few of them, 33,33%, highlighted technological limitations.

The discussion ended by providing sustainable measures for language preservation. The third research question that was aimed for data collection was “Which strategies can effectively promote sustainable language conservation in Cameroon?”. According to the result of this data collection, the participants were able to make some possible suggestion that could help preserve indigenous languages. Some of their suggestions included.

- **Community-Led Language Initiatives:** Engaging local communities in language preservation efforts is essential. This can include establishing language nests and community language schools where children are immersed in their native languages from an early age. Programs should be developed that involve parents and elders to reinforce the cultural significance of their languages. For example, local cultural associations can work to highlight the importance of their languages through dance, music, and theater, engaging the community in ways that reinforce the relevance of their linguistic identity (Batibo, 2005).

- **Policy Reform and Advocacy:** Advocating for language rights and the recognition of indigenous languages in official settings is crucial. Policymakers should implement laws that support the teaching of local languages in schools and their use in governmental functions. Additionally, funding should be allocated for language documentation and revitalization projects.

- **Leveraging Technology:** Digital platforms can be powerful tools for language

preservation. Developing mobile applications and websites that provide resources, such as dictionaries, learning materials, and forums for speakers, can help younger generations engage with their languages. Social media campaigns can also raise awareness and encourage pride in linguistic heritage.

- **Research and Documentation:** Extensive research should be conducted to document endangered languages, their speakers, and their cultural contexts. Collaborations with linguists and anthropologists can aid in creating comprehensive databases that serve as resources for future language revitalization efforts. According to Tadadjeu (1995) this collaboration can result in valuable documentation that not only supports language preservation but also contributes to the understanding of linguistic diversity in Cameroon. The establishment of language research centers dedicated to the study and promotion of indigenous languages can further enhance these efforts. In addition, the results analysis that was carried out also pointed out that there are more remedies to this language conservation problem. For instance, figure 5 as seen in the previous section, those who participated contributed by choosing favorable measures for sustainable language conservation in Cameroon. Firstly, they were asked which strategies they think is the most important for sustainable language conservation in Cameroon. Their choices were quite impressive because 66 of them (62.9%) suggested that integrating language into the education system was the best option for language conservation while 47 people (44.8%) preferred the development of digital resources such as apps and online dictionaries etc.

Furthermore, 72 of these participants, most of them (68.6%) are of the view that promoting languages through media and cultural events will be more effective on language conservation. On the other hand, 37 participants (35,2%) suggested supporting community-led documentation and preservation could stimulate the language preservation concert. The secondary minority, (31,4%) opted for government policies and support and the least of them all (17,1%) believed that international collaboration and funding could possibly be the best option. It should be known that language conservation is a phenomenon that requires so must efforts and consistency. For instance, creating teaching materials and training educators to use indigenous languages in classrooms strengthens language transmission among younger generations. Taking into consideration, the Cameroon National Curriculum for Mother Tongue-Based Education

has incorporated several indigenous languages, fostering their continued use (Mba and Quinque, 2017).

In a nutshell, the multicultural linguistic landscape of Cameroon is a vital component of its identity and heritage. This study has explained the origin of official languages in Cameroon and how it has been given more priority in the previous years to the detriment of native languages which has equality interrupted the identities of many Cameroonian individuals especially the present generation. Moreover, Cameroon's bilingual identity should politically and culturally exceed the two official languages by including native languages into the formal system. From the above sections, starting from the language situation in Cameroon extending right to the measures of language preservation, One can say that the nation Cameroon is politically bilingual but culturally multilingual. However, the urgent threats to indigenous languages necessitate immediate and sustained action by implementing community-driven initiatives, advocating for supportive policies, leveraging technology, and focusing on research.

Cameroon can foster a more sustainable approach to language conservation. Ultimately, preserving these languages is not only about maintaining linguistic diversity but also about safeguarding the rich cultural tapestry that they represent. Future generations deserve the opportunity to connect with their linguistic heritage and use it as a foundation for their identities. This study has helped discover more about Cameroon not only discovering the linguistic landscape but also analyzes the point of view of Cameroonians through the online questionnaire survey. Furthermore, this study proceeded with the help of some ethnologies, for instance, (Van Pinxteren, 2022) who suggested five principles on how to promote and learn a native language and making it a part of the Cameroon educational system. These principles include, Developing a limited number of designed languages for education, Design languages should be chosen in such a way that they are easy to learn for as many speakers of discerned languages as possible choose designed languages in such a way that all must exert a relatively low but relatively equal effort to learn them, Make use of existing bilingualism as a resource, and lastly Build incentives for linguistic collaboration, especially for related linguistic communities.

In addition to these principles, and other measures mentioned during this study mainly

for the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages, Cameroon might experience a positive change in the nearest future since, the upcoming generation will have to practice and promote their culture using the measures and solutions provided during this study giving greater opportunity for indigenous languages to be brought back into the system and prioritized. Personally, this study could impact the mindset of the younger changer instilling in them the right to prioritize their native language even though English and French language has been governing Cameroon for a very long time as official languages. It should then be noted that Multiculturalism in Cameroon is a case study that has been studied over the years and could possibly have a positive outcome.

Conclusion

The multicultural linguistic landscape of Cameroon is a vital component of its identity and heritage. However, the urgent threats to its languages necessitate immediate and sustained action. By implementing community-driven initiatives, advocating for supportive policies, leveraging technology, and focusing on research, Cameroon can foster a more sustainable approach to language conservation. Ultimately, preserving these languages is not only about maintaining linguistic diversity but also about safeguarding the rich cultural tapestry that they represent. Future generations deserve the opportunity to connect with their linguistic heritage and use it as a foundation for their identities.

Multiculturalism In Cameroon and Strategies for Language Conservation Summary in Italian

Il Camerun, paese dell’Africa centrale con circa 29 milioni di abitanti, è uno dei paesi più ricchi linguisticamente al mondo, con oltre 250 lingue appartenenti principalmente alle famiglie Niger-Congo e Afro-Asiatica. Questa diversità, considerata un tesoro culturale, è minacciata da fattori come la globalizzazione, l’urbanizzazione e la predominanza del francese e dell’inglese, le lingue ufficiali. La tesi ha come obiettivi documentare lo stato attuale delle lingue in Camerun, identificare le principali sfide per la loro conservazione e proporre strategie sostenibili. Le domande di ricerca includono lo stato delle lingue camerunesi, le minacce chiave e le strategie per una conservazione efficace. Dopo l’indipendenza, molti paesi africani, tra cui il Camerun, scelsero di mantenere le lingue coloniali come ufficiali per favorire l’unità nazionale. A causa della storia coloniale del Camerun, sia il francese che l’inglese divennero lingue ufficiali, con una prevalenza del francese nella maggior parte delle regioni. La colonizzazione iniziò con la Germania nel XIX secolo e proseguì con la Francia e la Gran Bretagna dopo la Prima Guerra Mondiale. Dopo l’indipendenza, il Camerun ha mantenuto una struttura politica centralizzata, ma la dominanza del francese ha generato tensioni nelle regioni anglofone, portando a movimenti separatisti e a una risposta repressiva. Il primo capitolo si concentra sulla diversità linguistica dell’Africa, con particolare attenzione all’Africa centrale e occidentale. Questa regione è caratterizzata da una straordinaria varietà di lingue, stimate tra 500 e 1.000, originate da complesse storie di migrazioni, scambi culturali e commerci. Le lingue africane appartengono principalmente a tre famiglie: Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatica e Nilo-Sahariana. La famiglia Niger-Congo è la più diffusa in Africa occidentale e comprende lingue come Yoruba, Igbo e Wolof. Queste lingue presentano sistemi di classi nominali e morfologie verbali complesse. La famiglia Afro-Asiatica è rappresentata principalmente dalla lingua Hausa, utilizzata come lingua franca nel Sahel. Le lingue Nilo-Sahariana, come Kanuri e Songhay, si distinguono per i loro complessi sistemi tonali e morfologie verbali ricche.

La diversità linguistica è anche il risultato di contesti sociopolitici dinamici, con fenomeni come il multilinguismo e l’uso di creole e pidgin. Tuttavia, molte lingue sono minacciate dall’urbanizzazione e dalla diffusione di lingue globali come inglese e francese, con

UNESCO che ha identificato alcune lingue come in via di estinzione. Il concetto di landscape linguistico si riferisce alla visibilità e prominenza delle lingue nelle insegne pubbliche e commerciali, e il caso del Camerun è caratterizzato da una notevole multiculturalità. Questa diversità linguistica deriva da una complessa storia di migrazioni, scambi commerciali e colonialismo, con potenze coloniali come Gran Bretagna, Francia e Germania che hanno diviso il paese nel XIX secolo.

Nel Camerun, le lingue ufficiali sono l'inglese e il francese, introdotte durante il periodo coloniale, e sono utilizzate nell'amministrazione, nei media e nel sistema educativo. Le lingue indigene, definite anche lingue nazionali, sono per lo più usate in contesti familiari e sociali. Nonostante il bilinguismo ufficiale, il francese domina la comunicazione quotidiana, relegando l'inglese a una posizione secondaria, il che contribuisce a un senso di inferiorità linguistica tra le lingue indigene.

Il secondo capitolo si concentra sulle sfide che affrontano le lingue indigene del Camerun, in particolare a causa dell'adozione del francese e dell'inglese come lingue ufficiali. Tali sfide si manifestano in vari settori, tra cui l'istruzione, la politica e la sfera sociale, e il capitolo propone anche possibili misure per preservare queste lingue.

Dominanza delle Lingue Ufficiali: Il bilinguismo francese-inglese ha portato alla marginalizzazione delle lingue indigene nelle istituzioni educative e governative, con molti giovani che preferiscono imparare le lingue ufficiali.

Urbanizzazione e Migrazione: La rapida urbanizzazione spinge i migranti a adattarsi alle lingue dominanti per integrarsi, portando all'abbandono delle lingue native, specialmente tra le nuove generazioni.

Mancanza di Documentazione Linguistica: Molte lingue indigene non sono documentate, rendendo difficile la loro conservazione e il loro insegnamento. La mancanza di risorse come dizionari e materiali didattici ostacola gli sforzi di rivitalizzazione.

Politiche Educative: L'istruzione in Camerun privilegia le lingue ufficiali, riducendo lo status delle lingue indigene. Sebbene ci siano tentativi di integrare le lingue locali nel sistema educativo, questi sforzi sono spesso sporadici e sottofinanziati.

Supporto Governativo Insufficiente: La mancanza di un supporto coerente e di politiche chiare per la conservazione delle lingue indigene contribuisce al loro declino. È necessaria una collaborazione maggiore tra le agenzie governative, le comunità locali e

le organizzazioni internazionali.

Stigma Sociale e Percezione: Le lingue indigene sono spesso viste come meno prestigiose rispetto al francese e all'inglese, spingendo le persone, soprattutto i giovani, ad abbandonarle in favore di lingue dominanti associate a migliori opportunità sociali ed economiche.

Influenza dei Media Globali e della Tecnologia: La predominanza dei contenuti mediatici in inglese e francese marginalizza le lingue indigene. La mancanza di risorse digitali in queste lingue limita la loro visibilità e accessibilità.

Interruzione della Trasmissione Intergenerazionale: La trasmissione delle lingue è fondamentale per la loro sopravvivenza, ma molte famiglie smettono di utilizzare le lingue indigene con i propri figli, preferendo l'uso delle lingue ufficiali.

Mancanza di Coinvolgimento della Comunità: Le iniziative di conservazione delle lingue spesso mancano di supporto locale, risultando in approcci dall'alto che non coinvolgono attivamente le comunità linguistiche.

Conflitto Politico e Instabilità: I conflitti nelle regioni anglofone del Camerun hanno ulteriormente complicato la conservazione delle lingue, portando alla dislocazione e alla rottura della coesione sociale. Il capitolo due conclude che le sfide per la conservazione delle lingue indigene in Camerun sono complesse e coinvolgono fattori sociali, educativi, politici e tecnologici. È fondamentale un approccio inclusivo che riconosca il valore della diversità linguistica e promuova la partecipazione attiva delle comunità. Attraverso azioni concertate da parte di governo, istituzioni educative e comunità locali, è possibile sviluppare strategie per migliorare la visibilità e l'uso delle lingue indigene, assicurandone la sopravvivenza per le generazioni future.

Il capitolo tre a servito per analizzare ulteriormente questo studio, è stata condotta un'indagine attraverso un questionario online realizzato su Google Forms, composto da 10 domande a scelta multipla. Il questionario è stato condiviso tramite gruppi WhatsApp con studenti del primo anno dell'Università di Bamenda in Camerun, oltre a amici e familiari. La prima parte del questionario si concentra sulle opinioni degli individui riguardo all'importanza delle lingue indigene del Camerun, mentre la seconda parte riguarda le possibili soluzioni per promuovere queste lingue. Hanno partecipato all'indagine un totale di 106 persone, di entrambi i sessi, parlanti francese e inglese. Tra

i partecipanti, 64 erano donne e 40 uomini, con un'età compresa tra i 20 e i 30 anni. Per raccogliere dati per affrontare le questioni di ricerca specifiche, sono stati utilizzati metodi sia quantitativi che qualitativi.

Di seguito sono elencate le 10 domande a scelta multipla utilizzate per questo studio:

Quali lingue parli fluentemente?

Quanto credi sia importante preservare e promuovere le lingue indigene in Camerun?

Pensi che l'uso delle lingue indigene stia diminuendo nella tua comunità?

Ci sono programmi o iniziative attivi nella tua comunità per preservare le lingue indigene?

Quanto pensi siano efficaci i programmi attuali di preservazione linguistica nella tua comunità?

Quali strategie ritieni siano più importanti per una conservazione sostenibile delle lingue in Camerun?

Quale ruolo dovrebbe avere il governo nel sostenere gli sforzi di conservazione linguistica?

Come può la tecnologia essere utilizzata al meglio per supportare la preservazione delle lingue indigene?

Quali ritieni siano le principali barriere per una efficace preservazione linguistica nella tua comunità?

Quale ulteriore supporto o risorse sarebbero più utili per promuovere la conservazione linguistica?

L'approccio del questionario di indagine è stato progettato per raccogliere opinioni e dati pertinenti da un campione rappresentativo di giovani adulti, al fine di valutare la percezione riguardo all'importanza delle lingue indigene e le strategie per la loro promozione in Camerun. Questo metodo di ricerca fornisce un quadro utile per comprendere le attitudini e le necessità locali, contribuendo così alla discussione su come preservare e valorizzare il patrimonio linguistico del paese.

In poche parole, il paesaggio linguistico multiculturale del Camerun è una componente vitale della sua identità e del suo patrimonio. Questo studio ha spiegato l'origine delle lingue ufficiali in Camerun e come è stata data più priorità negli anni precedenti a scapito delle lingue native che hanno paralizzato le identità di molti individui camerunesi soprattutto la generazione attuale. Inoltre, l'identità bilingue del Camerun dovrebbe

politicamente e culturalmente superare le due lingue ufficiali includendo le lingue native nel sistema formale. Dalle sezioni precedenti, a partire dalla situazione linguistica del Camerun che si estende diritto alle misure di conservazione della lingua, si può dire che la nazione Camerun è politicamente bilingue ma culturalmente multilingue. Il Camerun può promuovere un approccio più sostenibile alla conservazione delle lingue. In ultima analisi, la conservazione di queste lingue non riguarda solo il mantenimento della diversità linguistica, ma anche la salvaguardia del ricco arazzo culturale che esse rappresentano. Le generazioni future meritano l'opportunità di connettersi con il loro patrimonio linguistico e di utilizzarlo come base per le loro identità. Questo studio ha contribuito a scoprire di più sul Camerun non solo scoprendo il paesaggio linguistico, ma anche analizzando il punto di vista dei camerunesi.

il Camerun potrebbe sperimentare un cambiamento positivo nel prossimo futuro poiché, la prossima generazione dovrà praticare e promuovere la propria cultura utilizzando le misure e le soluzioni fornite durante questo studio, dando maggiori opportunità alle lingue indigene di essere riportate nel sistema e di essere prioritate. Personalmente, questo studio potrebbe influenzare la mentalità dei più giovani che cambiano instillando in loro il diritto di dare priorità alla loro lingua madre anche se l'inglese e il francese sono stati a lungo governare il Camerun come lingue ufficiali.

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